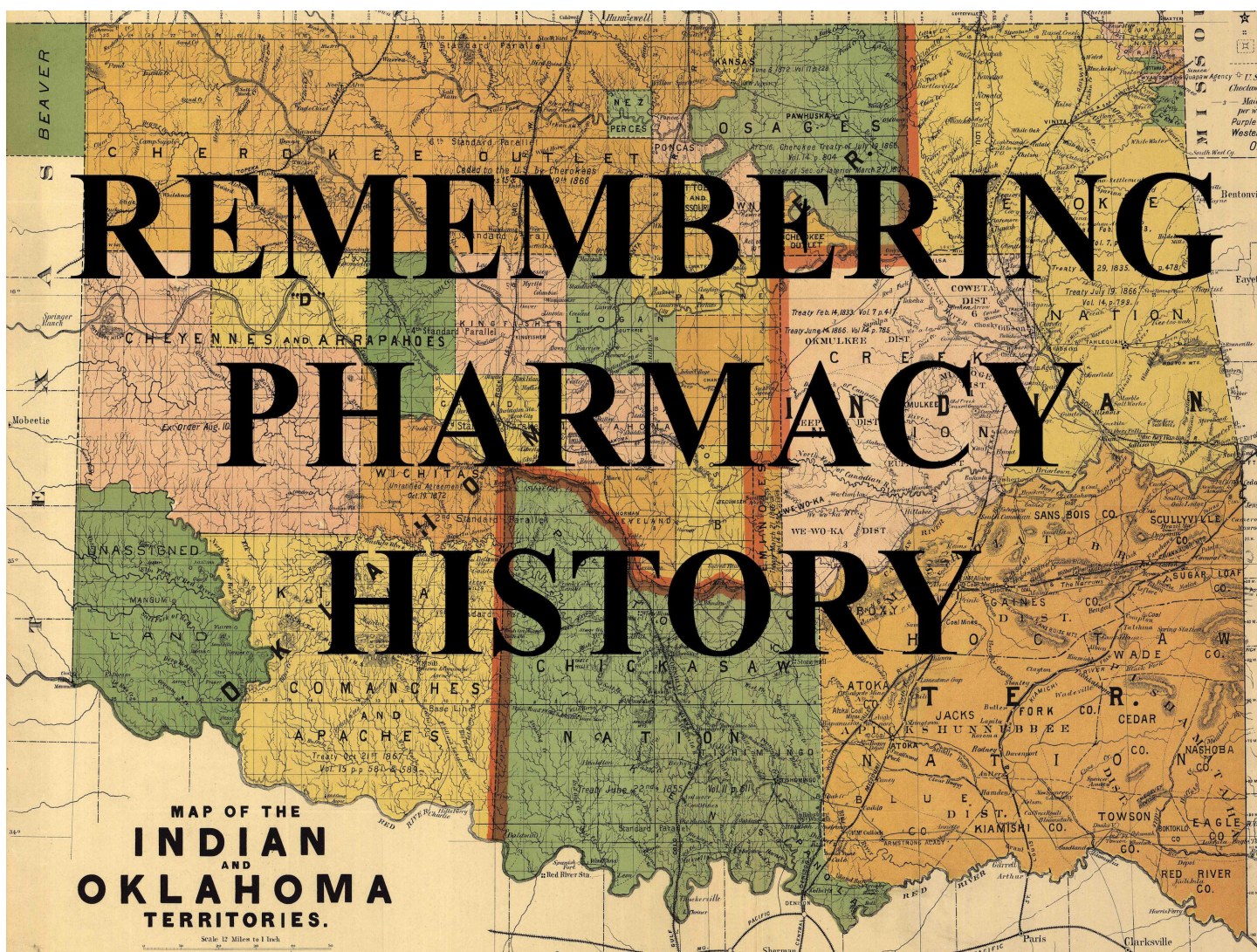


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Felix W. Bird, William Bell Davidson, Israel Wellington
Folsom, and Harry Holland Hokey



*Cover Logo based on an
1892 map of Indian and
Oklahoma Territories in the
United States Library of
Congress.*

PHARMACISTS OF THE CHOCTAW NATION

Felix W. Bird, William Bell Davidson, Israel Wellington Folsom, and Harry Holland Hokey

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Felix W. Bird

Felix was born on November 23, 1872, in Sheridan, Grant County, Arkansas, a few miles south of Little Rock. His parents, William and Kate (Mitchell) Bird, were both born in Alabama and moved to Grant County in about 1860. In 1870, William was working as a laborer on the Mitchell farm, where he met Kate. They were married soon thereafter. Kate died in 1878, shortly after the birth of a second son, Samuel. William, Felix, and Samuel were left as survivors. William, however, died in about 1885 and Felix was reared by a grandfather.



Felix and Kate (Gatewood) Bird, 1951. From Patricia Taliaferro.

In October of 1889, at almost seventeen years of age, Felix went on his own initiative to Cameron, Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory. The St. Louis and San Francisco Railway passed through Cameron from Fort Smith, Arkansas as early as 1887 and a post office was established there in 1888. Felix probably selected Cameron because it was a growing town offering good employment opportunities.

Felix initially obtained work picking cotton, clearing land, and being engaged in miscellaneous agricultural labor on farms in the Cameron region. In about 1891, he started learning the drug business when he obtained a position in the Cameron drug store owned by M. F. Gray, a local physician. By 1894, Gray had formed a partnership in the store with George Buchanan Noble and the store was known as Noble & Gray.

Felix became a trusted employee and friend of George Noble and was continued as an employee. In 1895, Noble formed another partnership in Cameron with Walter Patrick Gatewood, starting the Noble & Gatewood Drug Store in town. Felix had been quick to learn about pharmacy, and, on February 17, 1896, became manager of the Noble & Gatewood Drug Store. Meanwhile, George Noble developed other interests after being appointed by Marshal James J. McAlester to be Chief Deputy Marshal for the Cameron District.

By the time he started managing the Noble & Gatewood store, Felix had already started saving his money so that he could eventually become a drug store owner himself. When Gatewood withdrew from the partnership with Noble in late 1896, Felix purchased an interest in the store and the name was changed to Noble & Bird.

On May 5, 1898, at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Felix enlisted in Company D of the First Arkansas Volunteer Infantry. When the unit was mustered in at Little Rock on May 14, Felix was given the rank of Corporal. The First Arkansas was sent to Camp George H. Thomas at Chickamauga, Georgia, for training and was



George Buchanan Noble. From The Poteau News, September 5, 1940.

still training there when the war ended in the fall of 1898. Felix's unit was mustered out at Camp Thomas on October 25, 1898, without having been in combat.

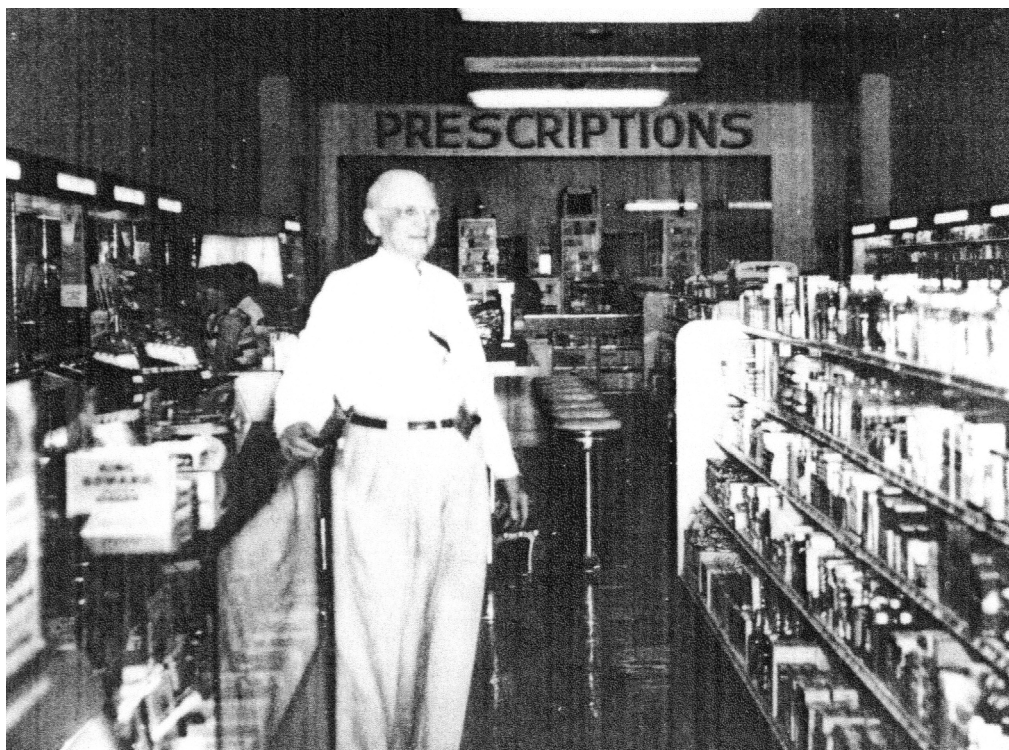
At the end of the Spanish-American War, Felix went back to Cameron where he and George Noble sold their drug stock to Alfred King. On January 1, 1899, the firm of Noble & Bird bought a new stock of drugs and opened a drug store in the recently incorporated town of Poteau, southwest of Cameron, in the Choctaw Nation. While Felix managed the store in Poteau, he was able, in 1900 and 1901, to attend classes at Barnes Medical College in St. Louis.

After graduating from Barnes, Felix practiced medicine for a short time in McCurtain and Milton, located in the Choctaw Nation northwest of Poteau. The proximity of these towns enabled Felix to practice medicine in those locations and continue managing the Noble & Bird drug store in Poteau. Felix soon gave up his medical practice and moved back to Poteau to focus on the drug store. From that point, he was commonly referred to as "Doc Bird" by his many admirers in the state as well as in the town of Poteau.

One of the factors influencing Felix's return to the city environment of Poteau was his marriage, on December 7, 1903, to Kate Gatewood. Kate was a daughter Walter Patrick and Della Ann (Carr) Gatewood and lived in Cameron while Felix was there. She was born on February 5,



Felix W. Bird in two eras of his life, 1899 (left) and 1931. From Meyer Brothers Druggist, 20 (June, 1899): 32; and ODL files.



*John Wofford Gatewood inside his Owl Drug Store in Pryor, Oklahoma, 1957.
From Gatewood family and Patricia Taliaferro.*

1879, in Forest, Scott County, Mississippi, and came to the Indian Territory with her family in the 1890s. Her father was the former partner of George Noble in the drug store at Cameron, and, at the time of Kate's wedding, a merchant in Vinita. One of Kate's brothers, John Wofford Gatewood, became a pharmacist and owned a drug store in Pryor, Mayes County, Oklahoma, between the years of 1919 and 1967. He was issued pharmacist certificate number 3225 by the Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy.

The Noble & Bird Drug Store at Poteau continued operation until the partnership was dissolved in 1910. George Noble moved to Oklahoma City and became a state employee in various capacities. He died on September 4, 1940, after moving back to Poteau from Oklahoma City.

The Noble & Bird Drug Store at Poteau was sold in 1910 to the Kidd Brothers. In April of that year, Felix was devoting his time to managing the Poteau Abstract Company. He later became involved in real estate and the insurance businesses.

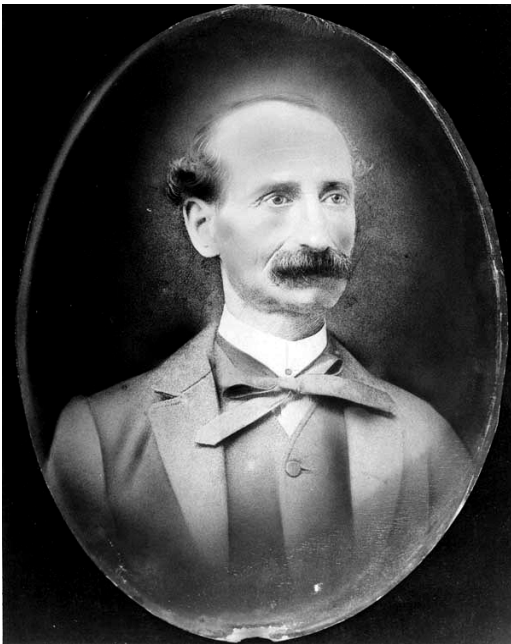
When he left the drug business, Felix let his pharmacy registration expire. He had been issued certificate number 295 on January 17, 1905, by the Indian Territory Board of Pharmacy. In January of 1908, the newly organized Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy gave him pharmacist certificate number 80. On May 19, 1931, his application for reinstatement by the pharmacy board was approved. His reason for asking to be reinstated was that he was preparing to repurchase the drug store in Poteau that he and George Noble had sold to the Kidd Brothers back in 1910.

In September of 1932, Felix bought the Palace Drug Store and the Kidd Brothers Drug Company in Poteau, combined the stocks of the two stores, and started back in business as the Bird Drug Store. He set up his insurance company in the rear of the pharmacy and hired other pharmacists to manage the drug end of the business. The Bird Drug Store continued in Poteau until about 1947 when it was sold to Omer Payne and W. E. Sublett.

Felix had a long history of service to the Poteau community. He was mayor for two terms, president of the local school board, city clerk, city water commissioner, councilman, and member of the county excise board. He was also a member of the Poteau Masonic Lodge, a charter member of the Poteau Rotary Club, and president of the Poteau Chamber of Commerce. During World War I, Felix was on the draft board and active in the Red Cross as well as in Liberty Bond drives. He served on the county rationing board during the second world war. In 1927, he was elected as a Democrat to represent LeFlore County in the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

Felix died in Poteau on February 17, 1952, and Kate died at the age of 101 on September 14, 1980, leaving no descendants. They are buried in Poteau's Oakland Cemetery.

William Bell Davidson



William Bell Davidson. From Barbara Davidson Norkus.

William was born in Scotland on February 11, 1854 and immigrated to the United States in about 1870. He married Mary Catherine Freed on October 31, 1889, in Sebastian County, Arkansas. She was a daughter of Frederick and Margaret (Ruhl) Freed, born on January 3, 1855, in Tiffin, Seneca County, Ohio. William and Mary had one son, Benjamin Freed, born in Ratliff, Logan County, Arkansas, on January 18, 1891.

By 1894, William, Mary, and Ben were living in the Arkansas River town of Tamaha, Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory. William was referred to as "Doc" since he operated a drug store in Tamaha. In addition, Doc was postmaster there from October 29, 1896 to September 6, 1899. He served at least two terms as the town Recorder and was a Notary Public.

Doc Davidson was a charter member of the Tamaha Masonic Lodge #8 that began on November 3, 1894. He served the organization in most of its offices, including Senior Warden, Worshipful Master, and Secretary.

He was a registered pharmacist in at least one state, perhaps Arkansas, but did not obtain a license from the Indian Territory Board of Pharmacy when it formed in 1904. Doc had a typical drug store in Tamaha, selling drugs, drug sundries, paint, oils, tobacco products, books, and stationery. He did not have a soda fountain in his store. For most of his time in the small town of Tamaha, Doc faced little competition. Elmer Cole put in a drug store there in 1900, but did not stay for more than a year.

Doc died in Tamaha on July 30, 1906, and is buried in the Tamaha Cemetery, Haskell County, Oklahoma. Mary and Ben are buried there as well.

Israel Wellington Folsom

Israel Wellington Folsom was referred to commonly as "I. W." by the press and in official documents of his day. Born on November 5, 1846, near Carriage Point, Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory, he was a member of a popular and distinguished Choctaw family. His father, Israel Folsom, was born on May 1, 1802, in the Choctaw Nation, Mississippi Territory, a son of Nathaniel Folsom.





Israel Wellington Folsom. From the Oklahoma Historical Society.

T. P. Howell.

I. W. Folsom.

Drs. HOWELL and FOLSOM,

Having formed a copartnership in the practice of medicine, and having located ourselves permanently, at Atoka, Middle Boggy,

 We offer our professional services to the country at large 

We will keep a complete assortment of
Practical Medicines,
constantly on hand.

Office at the old Post Office, south side of the bridge.

GIVE US A TRIAL.

June 27, 1872.

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Advertisement by Folsom and Howell for their medical practice and drug store. From *The Vindicator* (New Boggy), July 11, 1872.

Nathaniel was born on May 17, 1756, in Rowan County, North Carolina, and moved to Georgia at a young age with his parents, who were of English descent. He became a trader in the Choctaw Nation, Mississippi Territory, at the time of the American Revolutionary War. As was allowed by Choctaw custom, Nathaniel entered into plural marriage with two sisters, Ai-Ne-Chi-Hoya and I-Ah-Ne-Cha, nieces of Choctaw Chief Miko Puskush. One of the sisters, said to have been Ai-Ne-Chi-Hoya, was the mother of Israel Folsom and grandmother of I. W. Folsom. In total, Nathaniel had twenty-four children.

Nathaniel continued trading in Mississippi, mainly in Bok Tukla, and moved west in 1832 during the "Trail of Tears" migration of the Choctaw Nation to their new location in Indian Territory. He died at Mountain Fork, later named Eagletown, on October 19, 1833.

Nathaniel's son Israel was educated and became a minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church while living in Mississippi. He is said to have been the first person to translate the Lord's Prayer into the Choctaw language. Israel married Lovica "Louisa" Dovie Nail on April 11, 1824, and brought the family to Indian Territory, settling initially in Eagletown, at the same time as his father. Louisa was born in the Choctaw Nation, Mississippi Territory, on February 28, 1807, a daughter of Joel Henry and Mary (Welch) Nail. Other members of her family married into the Folsom family as well and came to Indian Territory at about the same time as Israel and Louisa.

As a result of his ministerial duties in the Presbyterian Church and his involvement in Choctaw Nation politics, Israel moved his family to a number of locations in the Choctaw Nation. Ten of their fifteen children lived to adulthood. I. W. was their eleventh child and, by the time of his birth, the family was living at Carriage Point, not far from Nail's Crossing at Blue River. This location enabled I. W. to obtain part of his early education in Paris, Lamar County, Texas. After the American Civil War, during which he served for a short time in the Confederate Army, he attended Cumberland University in Lebanon, Wilson County, Tennessee, and King College in Bristol, Sullivan County, Tennessee. Moving further east, I. W. went to Baltimore, Baltimore County, Maryland, where he graduated from Washington Medical College in 1872.

I. W. FOLSOM, M. D. SURGEON.

**Venerial Diseases. Operative Surgery and
diseases peculiar to this climate a specialty.**

**.....OFFICE.....
ON MAIN ST. BET HARVEY & HUDSON**

Advertisement by I. W. Folsom after moving to Oklahoma City. From Oklahoma Gazette (Oklahoma City), September 16, 1889.

Returning to the Choctaw Nation after graduation, I. W. established a medical practice and drug store at Atoka. He initially entered into a partnership in these enterprises with a cousin, Thomas Pitchlynn Howell, who also attended Cumberland University and, in 1872, obtained a medical degree from the University of Maryland in Baltimore.

By 1874, I. W.'s partnership with Thomas was dissolved. After Thomas left Atoka, he practiced medicine in Pauls Valley, Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory for about two years. In 1876, he settled on a ranch about five miles west of the Chickasaw Nation town of Davis. I. W. continued his medical practice and drug store alone in Atoka.

On May 5, 1875, I. W. married Lula Belle Russell, a daughter of William W. and Louisa Russell. She was born in Missouri on December 16, 1861, and moved to Atoka with her family in 1873. The children of I. W. and Lula Belle Folsom were Lula (b. 1877, d. 1877), William W. (b. 1879, d. 1951), Emma Pearl (b. 1881, d. 1904), and Wirt Telle (b. 1895, d. 1960).

In May of 1889, shortly after the run for homesteads in the unassigned land of Indian Territory, I. W. moved to the new town of Oklahoma City. This move appears to have been prompted, at least in part, by an April 7, 1889, gunfight he had in his Atoka drug store in which he shot and killed John Harkins. Even after being acquitted of a crime, I. W. decided to remain in Oklahoma City to practice medicine and operate a drug store.

In about 1892, I. W. moved his family to Ardmore, Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory, where he devoted the remainder of his life to the practice of medicine. He died on February 14, 1913, and is buried in Ardmore's Rose Hill Cemetery. Lula Belle is buried alongside I. W., having died in Ardmore in 1950. I. W.'s parents, Israel and Louisa, who died in 1870 and 1876, respectively, are buried in the Boggy Depot Cemetery, Atoka County, Oklahoma.

Harry Holland Hokey

Harry was born on July 2, 1874, in Higbee, Randolph County, Missouri. His parents, Charles H. and Christina (Holland) Hokey, were born in England and married in the early 1870s in Randolph County. Charles and Christina's father, James, were working in the coal mines around the newly formed town of Moberly. In 1876, Charles moved to the Choctaw Nation of Indian Territory to work in the coal mines developing in the region, later to become part of Pittsburg County, Oklahoma.



Harry Holland Hokey. From Meyer Brothers Druggist, 17 (October, 1896): 445.

Charles lived in several of the coal mining communities around the town of McAlester, including Savanna and Krebs. By 1887, a better opportunity came along and he opened a restaurant in Krebs. In April of 1888, Charles enlarged his restaurant at Krebs before selling it to W. Hutchinson. In late May of that year, he started a drug store in town to serve the needs of the local miners and farmers.

As did many of the drug stores in the region, Charles also sold alcohol in his drug store in Krebs. In early 1889, Sheriff Nail forced closure of the Hokey Drug in Krebs for violating the liquor laws of Indian Territory. Consequently, Charles stopped the practice and, in late March of 1889, hired a pharmacist, J. "Johnnie" C. Johnson, to operate the store.

Harry received much of his early education at the St. Joseph's School in Krebs. He later recalled that he was not interested in pharmacy until his father told him to either learn the drug business or become a coal miner. At the age of sixteen, Harry chose the drug business. Between 1889 and 1893, he learned about pharmacy from Johnnie Johnson working in his father's drug store in Krebs.

In October of 1893, Harry started his formal pharmacy studies by entering the St. Louis College of Pharmacy (SLCOP) in St. Louis, Missouri. In May of 1895, he received the Pharmaceutical Graduate (Ph.G.) diploma from the college and returned to Krebs to practice his profession, starting as manager of the Hokey Drug Store.

On March 8, 1896, Harry married Alice Baxendale in Fort Smith, Arkansas. She was born on March 17, 1875, in England and immigrated with her family to the United States in 1882. Harry and Alice had three daughters, Marie, Tenie, and Catherine.

Soon after Harry graduated from SLCOP, he became a member of the Indian Territory Pharmaceutical Association (ITPhA), which was formed in Muskogee on May 23, 1895. His membership number in the organization was 16. He was an active participant in the organization, presenting papers at several of the annual meetings of the organization. As examples, Harry presented "A Few Reasons Why We Should Dispense Our Own Preparations" at the 1896 meeting in Wagoner and "Adulterations And How We Are To Detect Them" at the 1897 meeting in South McAlester. At the 1897 meeting, he was elected to serve the organization as secretary for 1897-1898. In 1904, he was elected to the position of second vice-president of the ITPhA. Harry was nominated by the organization in 1904 and 1905 as a candidate for the Indian Territory Board of Pharmacy (ITBP).

On January 17, 1905, the ITBP gave Harry pharmacist certificate number 380. The pharmacist certificate number



Interior of Hokey's drug store, Krebs, Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory, ca. 1900. From OPhA files.



Krebs street scene with Hokey Drug Store in the corner building. From the author's collection.

1424 was given to Harry in 1908 by the Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy.

Like his father Charles, Harry participated in many civic and social events in Krebs. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge at Krebs and McAlester. In 1891, Harry pitched for the Krebs second team in a baseball game against the first team, which had future major league and Hall of Fame inductee Joe “Iron Man” McGinnity as pitcher. The second team won the game. In 1905, he was manager for the Krebs Cubs baseball team.

On February 5, 1943, Harry died of a heart attack after walking a few blocks from the drug store to his home in Krebs. Alice died in Krebs on December 2, 1941. She and Harry are buried in Oakhill Memorial Park in McAlester. Harry’s parents, Charles and Christina Hokey, who died on October 11, 1919, and August 24, 1922, respectively, are also buried in Oakhill Memorial Park.

Acknowledgements

The author expresses appreciation for support to Bird family member Patricia Taliaferro of Oklahoma City and to Davidson family member Barbara Davidson Norkus of Springfield, Virginia. Also, thanks to the Oklahoma Historical Society and to Jan Davis, Carol Guilliams, Linda Raulston, Linda Colbert, and Colleen Greene, professionals in the Archives and Records Division at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) in Oklahoma City, for their help.

Bibliographic

Information and images for these biographies were collected from many sources, including files at the Oklahoma Pharmacists Association (OPhA) office and the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City as well as various issues of Meyer Brothers Druggist, Pharmaceutical Era, Southern Pharmaceutical Journal, The Midwestern Druggist, The National Druggist, The Western Druggist, and newspapers from Oklahoma City, Poteau, Muskogee, Ardmore, Atoka, Krebs, and McAlester, Oklahoma. Valuable family information was also obtained from Bird family member Patricia Taliaferro and Davidson family member Barbara Davidson Norkus. Profiles for Felix W. Bird were found in Meyer Brothers Druggist, 20 (June, 1899): 32; Luther B. Hill, “A History of the State of Oklahoma” (Chicago, Lewis Publishing Company, 1909): 596; and Chronicles of Oklahoma, 36 (Number 1, 1958): 102-103. Biographical information for Israel Wellington Folsom was found in Irving Geffs “Bunky,” “The First Eight Months of Oklahoma City” (Oklahoma City, McMaster Printing Company, 1890): 59; H. F. O’Beirne, “Leaders and Leading Men of the Indian Territory. I. Choctaws and Chickasaws” (Chicago, American Publishers Association, 1891): 150; and Elizabeth Knowles Folsom, “Genealogy of the Folsom Family,” Volume 2 (Rutland, Vermont, Tuttle Publishing Company, 1938): 843. Additionally, the so-called “Indian-Pioneer Papers” have been a source of information regarding Israel Wellington Folsom and Harry Holland Hokey. The ERA and Hayes Druggists directories have been used as aids to trace pharmacy locations in Oklahoma and United States census records to trace family locations and data. Especially beneficial for biographical information have been pharmacist applications for licensure as well as records of the Oklahoma Territory, Indian Territory, and Oklahoma State Boards of Pharmacy located in the Archives and Records Division of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL).